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MAY BE NEW RACE OR DESCENDANTS OF FRANKLIN'S PARTY

Stefansson, Now in Arctic Regions, Finds a Strange People in Victoria Land Who Give Rise to Interesting Theories.

Suppose all of Sir John Franklin's party seeking the Northwest passage in 1845 were not lost, contrary to the belief held for sixty years?

Suppose it should be found that instead of perishing from cold and hunger on their way south from the ice-bergs a few miles north of King William Land to the outposts of the Hudson Bay Company a considerable number of the 103 who deserted the Erebus and Terror on April 26, 1848, following the death of Sir John nearly a year before, found a small but friendly tribe of Eskimos in Victoria Land, a short distance to the south-west?

Suppose after waiting long for the rescue parties which searched for them for many years, and which found the graves of the dead but no signs of the living, these survivors, fair-haired Englishmen and Celts, should have given up hope of seeing their native land again and settled down to become part and parcel of the rude people who had saved them from certain death, marrying the maidens of this hardy people, and raising up families of their own?

The thing sounds more fantastical than it really is, according to V. Stefansson, who, with Dr. Rudolph M. Anderson, is heading one of the most important and successful arctic expeditions ever sent out by the American Museum of Natural History or any other American institution.

Eskimo Child and Mother.

Mr. Stefansson himself has found a strange new people in Victoria Land, well within the arctic circle, with few of the physical characteristics of the Eskimos, and far more closely resembling Scandinavian or Celtic peasants. These people have light hair, brown beards, and some have been seen who even had blue eyes, all characteristics wholly unknown among the whole-blooded Eskimos.

The explorer can account for their presence in Victoria Land on two theories only—as descendants of the survivors of Sir John Franklin's party, or, what is possibly even more interesting, as a last remnant of that historic Icelandic colony which disappeared as utterly from Greenland in the fifteenth century as it swallowed up by the earth itself. Writing from Dease River, late last year, to the director of the Museum, Mr. Stefansson gives an interesting account of his discovery of these remarkable people. His letter, which reached New York a few weeks ago after months of dog-sledge transportation from far beyond the outposts of civilization, says:

"After staying three days in this first-found village—Akullakattar, which was about in the middle of Dolphin and Union Strait, north of Cape Bexley—we set out to visit the only neighbors whose present location was known. These are the Ha-ner-ag-mut of Victoria Land, and we found them (May 17, 1910) camped on the coast about due north (or a little west of north) from Cape Bexley. There are probably about forty of them all told, but we saw only seventeen.

"A herald had preceded us to this village, and we were received more formally than we have been anywhere else on our wanderings before or

since. These people were none the less kind, though their manners differed considerably from their neighbors from the mainland; they are to me the most interesting group I have ever seen, and I regret now that I did not have the good sense to spend the summer with them instead of going further. But then we did not know what lay ahead of us to the east, and besides, I had a fear (of which I am ashamed) that if I did not go to the Coppermine, as I had said I would when I left home, it might be thought that I had been unable to do so. Further, your museum was sure to fare better in the matter of collections if I kept on to the Coppermine and the borders of civilization at Bear Lake.

"There are many things of great interest about the Victoria Land people, but the one thing I shall not omit here is the matter of their appearance in face and figure—their peculiar physical characteristics.

"I had been told by the whalers who wintered north of Prince Albert Sound—the schooner Olga in 1905-6 and in 1907-8—that the Victoria Landers differed strikingly in appearance from the Eskimos of Mackenzie in Alaska—they were said to have fair complexion, light beards, brown hair in some instances, and blue eyes in two or three cases noted.

"I can now corroborate these accounts (as relating to a group far from those ever seen by whalers) in all matters except that of the blue eyes. The general appearance of a group of these people is markedly different from any American aborigines I have seen—they suggest, in fact, a group of Scandinavian or North European peasants.

"Perhaps better than my characterization of them was that of my Alaskan Eskimo companion, who has worked for ten or more years on a whaling vessel: 'They are not Eskimos, they are fo'c'sle men.'

"Two of them had full chin beards to be described as light, tending to red or 'auburn'; every one had light eyes; one—perhaps the darkest of all—had hair that curled slightly. Their hair was in every case dark, but in two or three it resembled in appearance the black or dark brown hair of South Europeans as much as that of typical Eskimos.

"I asked one man for a lock of his hair, but by so doing created (as I in fact practically knew I should) a misunderstanding and distrust which I much regret. Naturally I was refused, for no doubt he thought I intended to practice magic charms on him through the possession of his hair.

"For like reasons I refrained from taking pictures except of houses, sleds, etc., and people at a distance,

and several possibilities suggest themselves, of which I set down the following:

"1. The Eskimo physical type varies considerably from Greenland to Siberia. It may be that all these variants are due partly to blood mixture, and that the earlier, purer type was more 'European' in character than we have been thinking. These peculiarly isolated Victoria Land people may have been preserved from blood mixture by a hedge of their surrounding countrymen, and may represent this earlier, purer type.

"2. Different environment may have caused them to vary from their race in the direction of Europeanizing them.

"3. There may have been direct admixture of European blood.

"(a) In the fifteenth century there disappeared from Greenland the Icelandic (Norse-Teutonic) colony in its entirety. This colony had a bishop of the church of Rome, two monasteries, a nursery, fourteen churches, and over 3000 inhabitants, who at one time sailed their own ships to Norway, to Iceland, and to America (Leif Ericsson was one of the Greenlanders, and to the general public best known of them all).

"This colony was in a fairly prosperous condition as late as 1412, and we have Vatican documents of a later date referring to it. When Hans Egede came there in the seventeenth century only house ruins remained to tell the story, and no sure trace of Scandinavianism in the language or blood of the Greenland Eskimo. Either the colony had been massacred by the Eskimos, had disappeared through famine or pestilence, or had emigrated in a body. This last view many scholars have favored from the first, and if they did emigrate they may be represented in part by the present Victoria Landers.

"(b) In the forties of the last century Franklin's expedition, with its full complement of men, was lost near the east coast of Victoria Land. Some of these men are accounted for by journal entries of officers who themselves later perished, and others by graves and unburied skeletons along the route toward Back's River, but many are yet unaccounted for.

"Franklin's men must have known there was a boat route to the Hudson Bay Company's posts on Mackenzie River, for Franklin's own three expeditions had discovered and mapped it chiefly by boat voyages. Is it unlikely then that some of his men attempted this route? And even if they did not, might not a few of his men have found their way to the Eskimos or Victoria Land and have had sufficient adaptability to learn Eskimo methods of self-support?

"A readily apparent objection to this hypothesis is that even Franklin's whole complement of men would be, if amalgamated with the entire body of Victoria Land Eskimo, insufficient to produce the markedly European type actually found today. The validity of this objection can be judged only after we have a complete census of the island and know how far the new type is present in some localities above others.

"(c) Collinson's and McClure's vessels wintered on the Victoria Land coast all together three years. This can hardly have had any influence, as the presence of a whaling fleet of 500 men or so at Herschel Island for over twenty years, and at Point Barrow and Point Hope for longer than that, has failed to produce any such type.

"In regard to the possibility of Franklin's men having survived for a time, there is the interesting contributory evidence that there are at various places I have visited this year people said to be named with the names of white men. One name in particular we have found in practically every community—Nerk. This is at Herschel, and further west the Eskimo pronunciation of the English 'Nod.'

"Of the other white men from whom children have been named I have learned no particulars, but one man, whose dead brother had been named Nerk, told me he had heard that the white Nerk had lived among our countrymen by the sea far away; that he was an excellent man; that he never would eat seal oil; that he froze to death one winter, and that he might perhaps not have frozen to death had he been more ready to eat seal oil (i. e., he starved to death, or rather froze because weak from hunger. This last detail is convincing to me, so far as it goes, for I have known a case of a white man who for days refused his doled-out ration of oil, and might easily have lost his life for want of the strength which the oil enabled his companions to maintain.)

"The oldest person I have seen bearing the name 'Nerk' is a woman of over twenty. As children take names only after the death of the person from whom the name comes, the white 'Nerk' must have died over twenty years ago. Whether this woman was named directly from the white man or from another Eskimo (who in turn had his name from the white man) I failed to learn, because of a general reticence about such matters and because none of us had mastered the local dialects to any extent at the time we saw this woman.

"As to identifying an English name with Eskimo pronunciation of it, that is a different matter. To illustrate, I give below several names, with the location in which I have heard them so pronounced. The spelling is Bureau of Ethnology, and none of them is a nickname:

"Point Barrow—Mi-ji-mi for Mr. Stevenson; Pute for Fred.

"Herschel Island—Mishu for Mr. Harrison; Makapuk for Macomber; Kar-lug for Cottle.

"Coronation Gulf—Cau-na-pina for Hornby; Vel-vin-na for Melville; my own name was tak-i or saki until, after long and persistent efforts by myself and my Eskimos, I finally got the pronunciation to Nap-Pash-na, from which form it can not be changed to the better, apparently.

"The question of Victoria Land words from Old Norse I leave untouched, though I have some material for plausible identifications."

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